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Status of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Summary

The present report on the status of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations is submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 40/131. It indicates the activities undertaken with the resources of the Fund, its income and expenditure as well as the pledges and payments made to the Fund. In addition, it updates the information contained in the previous biennial report (A/63/166) and reports on the twenty-second and twenty-third sessions of the Board of Trustees, held in 2009 and 2010, respectively.

* A/65/150.

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I. Mandate of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations

1. The General Assembly, by its resolution 40/131, established the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations. The original purpose of the Fund was to assist representatives of indigenous communities and organizations in participating in the deliberations of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations of the then Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities by providing them with financial assistance, funded by means of voluntary contributions from Governments, non-governmental organizations and other private or public entities.

2. The mandate of the Fund was extended by the General Assembly in its resolution 50/156, which provided that the Fund would also be used to assist representatives of indigenous communities and organizations in participating in the deliberations of the open-ended intersessional working group of the Commission on Human Rights to elaborate the draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, established by the Commission in its resolution 1995/32 and endorsed by the Economic and Social Council on 25 July 1995. Subsequently, the Fund enabled over 130 specialized indigenous activists to attend sessions on the draft declaration and contribute to this important standard-setting exercise, which culminated in the approval of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the General Assembly in its resolution 61/295.

3. The mandate of the Fund was further extended following the creation, by the Commission on Human Rights (resolution 1998/20, endorsed by the Economic and Social Council in its decision 1998/247), of an open-ended intersessional ad hoc working group to elaborate and consider further proposals for the possible establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous people in the United Nations system. The General Assembly decided, in its resolution 53/130, that the Fund should also be used to assist indigenous representatives in participating in the deliberations of the ad hoc working group. The Fund subsequently allocated grants to some 50 indigenous representatives to attend meetings of the group.

4. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2000/22, established the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues as a subsidiary organ of the Council. As a response to this development, the General Assembly decided, in its resolution 56/140, that the Fund should also be used to assist representatives of indigenous communities and organizations in attending, as observers, the sessions of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

5. In its resolution 63/161, the General Assembly adjusted the mandate of the Fund so as to facilitate the participation of representatives of indigenous peoples' organizations in the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, established as a subsidiary organ of the Human Rights Council in accordance with its resolution 6/36.

II. Administration and Board of Trustees

6. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 40/131, the Fund is administered by the Secretary-General, in accordance with the relevant financial rules and

regulations of the United Nations on general trust funds for humanitarian assistance and with the advice of a Board of Trustees. The recommendations of the Board are approved by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on behalf of the Secretary-General. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) acts as the secretariat of the Fund and the Board.

7. The Board of Trustees is composed of five persons with relevant experience in issues affecting indigenous populations, who serve in their personal capacity as United Nations experts. The Board members are appointed by the Secretary-General for a three-year renewable term.

8. The five members appointed for the term ending on 31 December 2011 are Kenneth Deer (Canada), Melakou Tegegn (Ethiopia), Shankar Limbu (Nepal), Tarcila Rivera Zea (Peru) and Dalee Sambo Dorough (United States of America).

III. Grant cycle

A. Admissibility of new applications and selection process

9. Applications for travel grants to attend the 2011 sessions of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues must be submitted by the established deadline of 1 October 2010 to allow for analysis by the secretariat of the Fund and by the Board of Trustees. Admissible applications will be examined by the Board at its next session, in February 2011.

10. During the period between the receipt of the application and the next session of the Board, the secretariat of the Fund decides on the admissibility of applications on the basis of the mandate of the Fund.

11. Admissible application forms are verified by the secretariat of the Fund as to their conformity with approved selection criteria and additional information is requested from the organization, if necessary. Reference organizations and specialized networks are also consulted, if needed. The complete application form is then summarized and analysed by the secretariat in accordance with the selection criteria in chart form to facilitate the work of the Board.

12. At its annual session, the Board reviews all applications declared admissible, including the original application form, the analysis chart prepared by the secretariat and any other relevant information. It then makes recommendations to the Secretary-General in accordance with the criteria of the Fund.

13. After the session, the secretariat reviews all the recommendations of the Board for consistency with relevant United Nations administrative and financial rules and regulations. The High Commissioner for Human Rights approves, on behalf of the Secretary-General, the recommendations that are acceptable and the new best practices identified during the annual session of the Board.

14. Approved travel grants include a round-trip air ticket in economy class via the most direct route from the beneficiary's home town to Geneva or New York, which each beneficiary receives from his or her local travel agency, and a daily subsistence allowance for the days of the session, which he or she receives upon arrival in Geneva or New York.

B. Monitoring and evaluation by the Board of Trustees and the secretariat

15. The attendance and input of the recipients of travel grants are closely monitored during the sessions of the Expert Mechanism and the Permanent Forum. Moreover, beneficiaries are requested to provide a copy of any statement delivered as part of their reporting obligations and to complete questionnaires on their participation and follow-up activities upon return to their home countries. The secretariat of the Fund maintains a daily attendance sheet of the grantees.

16. At its annual session, the Board of Trustees reviews the status of all travel grants allocated in previous years, as well as the reports drafted by the secretariat analysing the questionnaires submitted by beneficiaries on their participation and follow-up activities.

17. The Chairperson, or another Board member, and a representative of the secretariat attend the sessions of the Expert Mechanism and the Permanent Forum in order to meet with all beneficiaries present and to assess the impact of their participation on the deliberations of the sessions.

IV. Twenty-second and twenty-third sessions of the Board of Trustees

18. The Board of Trustees held its twenty-second session from 16 to 20 March 2009 (10 meetings) and its twenty-third session from 8 to 12 February 2010 (10 meetings).

19. The Board examined information prepared by its secretariat concerning the financial situation of the Fund; new contributions paid and pledges made by Governments since its twenty-first session; and applications for new travel grants to attend the sessions of the Expert Mechanism and the Permanent Forum. The Board also met with representatives of donor Governments during its annual meetings with donors.

20. Grant recommendations made by the Board of Trustees at its twenty-second and twenty-third sessions were approved by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, on behalf of the Secretary-General, on 26 March 2009, 22 May 2009 and 24 February 2010, respectively.

A. Financial situation of the Fund

21. The table below indicates the contributions received for the attribution of grants at the twenty-second and twenty-third sessions of the Board of Trustees:

(United States dollars)

State, non-governmental organization or individuals	*Twenty-second session*	*Twenty-third session*	*Date paid*
Algeria	5 000		January 2008
		5 000	March 2009
Australia	23 584		April 2008
Azerbaijan	5 000		January 2008

State, non-governmental organization or individuals	*Twenty-second session*	*Twenty-third session*	*Date paid*
Brazil	20 000		December 2008
Chile		5 000	June 2009
		5 000	August 2009
Cyprus	4 298		March 2008
		3 631	January 2009
Denmark	58 708		January 2009
		57 285	January 2010
Estonia	29 818		August 2008
		8 987	July 2009
Russian Federation	100 000		December 2008
Finland	38 880		June 2008
		34 868	June 2009
		90 361	December 2009
Guatemala	6 000		January 2009
		10 000	September 2009
Holy See	1 000		February 2008
	1 000		July 2008
		1 000	March 2009
Mexico	21 500		October 2008
		16 304	August 2009
Spain	13 477		October 2008
		14 793	November 2009
Turkey	5 000		September 2008
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)		5 000	February 2009
Joy Garland		100	July 2009
Total	**333 265**	**257 329**	

B. Consideration of new applications and recommendations for grants at the twenty-second session

22. The Board considered 451 admissible applications and recommended 75 grants for representatives of indigenous communities and organizations to attend the eighth session of the Permanent Forum, for a total amount of approximately $307,437.

23. The Board considered 235 admissible applications and recommended 36 grants for representatives of indigenous communities and organizations to attend the second session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, for an approximate total of $104,585.

	Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples		*Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues*	
Geographical area[a]	*Number of applicants*	*Number of beneficiaries*	*Number of applicants*	*Number of beneficiaries*
Africa	80	10	116	20
Asia	63	9	177	22
Oceania and Pacific	48	3	26	9
Latin America	7	8	91	15
North America	17	2	18	3
Europe and others	20	3	23	6
Total	**235**	**36**	**451**	**75**

[a] The geographical distribution reflects the applications received and not necessarily the geographical distribution as used by the United Nations Secretariat and United Nations legislative bodies.

C. Consideration of new applications and recommendations for grants at the twenty-third session

24. The Board considered 104 admissible applications and recommended 37 travel grants for indigenous representatives to attend the third session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which took place in Geneva from 12 to 16 July 2010, for a total amount of approximately $113,314.

25. In addition, the Board considered 226 admissible applications and recommended 64 grants for indigenous representatives to attend the ninth session of the Permanent Forum, which took place in New York from 19 to 30 April 2010, for a total amount of approximately $299,210.

	Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples		*Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues*	
Geographical area[a]	*Number of applicants*	*Number of beneficiaries*	*Number of applicants*	*Number of beneficiaries*
Africa	40	9	80	18
Asia	30	9	80	25
Oceania and Pacific	7	4	10	4
Latin America	18	11	36	11
North America	0	0	1	1
Europe and others	9	4	18	5
Total	**104**	**37**	**226**	**64**

[a] The geographical distribution reflects the applications received and not necessarily the geographical distribution as used by the United Nations Secretariat and United Nations legislative bodies.

D. Other recommendations adopted by the Board of Trustees

Pre-screening, monitoring and impact assessment

26. In order to enhance the effectiveness of the secretariat and reduce its workload, the Board of Trustees recommended developing a directory of past beneficiaries of the Fund. This directory should contain relevant information on past beneficiaries, including information on their indigenous communities, activities of their respective organizations and the beneficiaries themselves, as well as on their field of expertise, experience in matters related to indigenous rights, evaluations and performance.

27. The Board recommended allocating a budget line of $45,000 for the hiring of a temporary administrative assistant to develop this directory, an initiative being undertaken by the secretariat of the Fund.

28. The Board recommended continuing the practice of involving regional indigenous organizations in the application pre-screening process.

29. The Board recommended that its members prepare an explanatory note to accompany the application forms. This explanatory note has been added to the new application forms for meetings to be held in 2011.

30. The Board recommended continuing the practice of requesting beneficiaries to report on their participation and the follow-up activities organized upon their return to ensure that the community may also benefit from their experience. The Board recommended that the sponsoring organizations/communities complete a questionnaire on the follow-up activities the grantees had undertaken.

31. The Board recommended that a compilation of success stories be prepared for its twenty-third session and distributed to donors.

32. The Board recommended identifying a core group of past Fund beneficiaries to initiate a network of Fund beneficiaries to share best practices and build upon each others' experiences. The network has been launched on the Indigenous Portal community website.

33. Where feasible, the Board recommended that Fund beneficiaries establish contacts with OHCHR field presences to seek assistance for follow-up activities related to the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and for any needs related to their visas or personal security.

Implementation and promotion of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

34. The Board welcomed the publication *State of the World's Indigenous Peoples*, prepared by the secretariat of the Permanent Forum, and recognized it as a useful tool for increasing awareness of the status and rights of indigenous peoples. The information contained in this publication highlights the need for and significance of the work of the Fund.

35. In recognition of the priority need to sustain the momentum generated by the adoption of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and by the fact that the Fund has supported 130 beneficiaries who were directly engaged in the drafting of the Declaration, the Board acknowledged that continuing promotion of the Declaration remains necessary.

36. Promotion of the Declaration should include a comprehensive strategy at the national level to target and generate interest in the media, human rights organizations, the legal community, national human rights institutions, universities, and other private and public sectors. The strategy should highlight the importance of increasing regional initiatives involving representatives of both indigenous peoples and national Governments.

37. The Board recommended that the Declaration be disseminated in languages additional to the official languages of the United Nations to reach indigenous communities worldwide and recommended engagement with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in this effort.

38. The Board recommended increasing collaboration between field offices and beneficiaries in order to raise awareness of the Declaration and the active assertion of rights by indigenous peoples. It also recommended that follow-up activities of beneficiaries be grounded in a human rights-based approach and, more specifically, be guided by principles contained in the Declaration, adding that such activities should include a component linked to the implementation of the Declaration.

Collaboration with civil society organizations

39. The Board welcomed the partnership established between OHCHR and the Indigenous Peoples' Centre for Documentation, Research and Information. The objectives of the partnership include: provide technical support to Fund beneficiaries through the publication of quarterly updates on international developments and a calendar of meetings related to indigenous rights; organize preparatory meetings on human rights mechanisms prior to sessions of the Expert Mechanism and the Permanent Forum, in four official United Nations languages; publish practical information guides for beneficiaries; operate technical secretariats during sessions of the Expert Mechanism and the Permanent Forum providing translation, printing and photocopying services; and documentation centre training programme.

40. The Board recommended that a training session be organized for Fund beneficiaries prior to the ninth session of the Permanent Forum and the third session of the Expert Mechanism to increase their capacity for effective participation in these mechanisms. The Board decided to allocate a maximum amount of $2,000 for such training. In addition, the Board agreed to assist in the identification of possible indigenous trainers.

41. The Board welcomed the collaboration between the Voluntary Fund, the United States Human Rights Fund and the Swiss Fund and recommended strengthening this collaboration.

Collaboration with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples

42. The Board welcomed the practice, established by the Special Rapporteur, of holding meetings with Funds grantees in parallel to the sessions of the Expert Mechanism and the Permanent Forum and recommended that the secretariat of the Fund continue to play an active role in disseminating information to grantees wishing to send information to or communicate with the Special Rapporteur.

43. The Board recommended that the secretariat of the Fund compile a list of past grantees in specific countries that the Special Rapporteur is planning to visit.

The future direction of the Fund

44. In the spirit of promoting constructive dialogue between Member States and indigenous peoples, and recalling the recommendations made to the Human Rights Council by the Working Group on Indigenous Populations of the Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights at its twenty-fourth session (see A/HRC/Sub.1/58/22 and A/HRC/Sub.1/58/L.11); and by the Expert Mechanism at its first session (see A/HRC/10/56), the Board welcomed and supported the expansion of the mandate of the Fund to include financial support for the participation of indigenous peoples in meetings of the Human Rights Council and the human rights treaty bodies.

45. The Board recommended that a comprehensive concept note be prepared on the expansion of the mandate of the Fund. The Board further recommended initiating dialogue with indigenous representatives, Member States, the Human Rights Treaties Branch and the secretariat of the Fund in order to give full effect to the proposal.

46. The Board welcomed the Human Rights Council resolution 12/13 on human rights and indigenous peoples, which also addresses the expansion of the mandate of the Fund. The Board agreed to provide any assistance necessary to OHCHR for the completion of the detailed document requested by the Human Rights Council. In addition, the Board held a general discussion on the question of the expansion of the mandate with the Chief of the Indigenous Peoples and Minorities Section.

E. Fund-raising

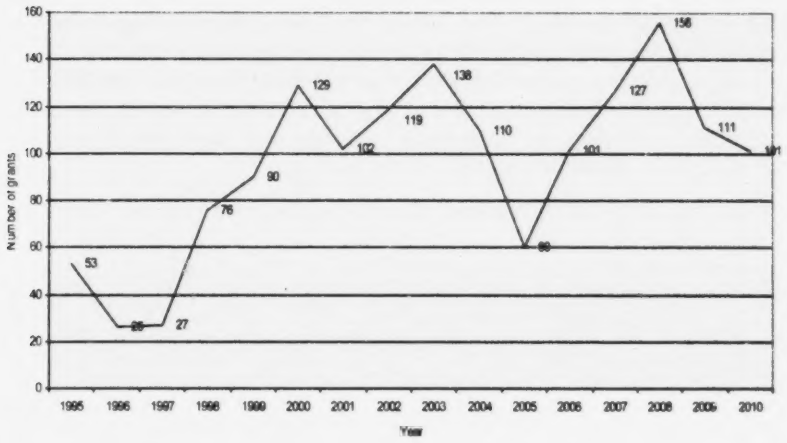
47. The Board held its annual meeting with donors on 10 February 2010. The meeting was attended by representatives of Australia, Bahrain, Canada, Cyprus, Colombia, Estonia, the Holy See, Mexico, Spain and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. A number of States thanked the Board for organizing the meeting. One State asked a specific question about the possible expansion of the mandate of the Fund to assist indigenous representatives in attending meetings of the Treaty Bodies and the Human Rights Council. The Board emphasized the fact that the recommendation to expand the mandate has been made by the Expert Mechanism and other bodies. In addition, Board members highlighted their willingness to assist OHCHR in the preparation of the detailed document requested by the Human Rights Council resolution and to continue their informal dialogue with Member States concerning the potential expansion of the Fund mandate.

48. The Board decided to send a letter of appeal to donors and potential donors on 13 September 2010 to coincide with the anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples, seeking additional contributions to be paid before the next session in order to increase the number of donors and allow the Board to increase the number of grants and the representation of indigenous communities and organizations next year. The Board noted that it would be useful for the appeal letter to include a request for donor Governments, where appropriate, to disseminate information about the Fund to indigenous organizations.

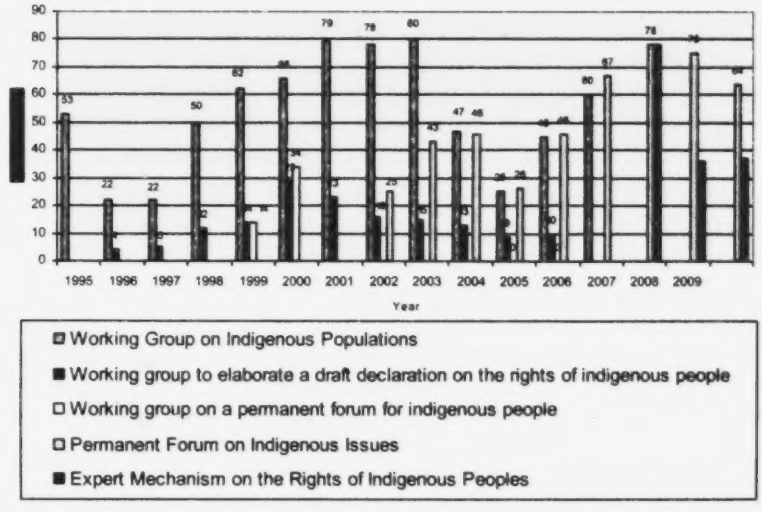
49. The Board also reiterated its earlier recommendation to establish a fellowship programme linked to the work of the Fund and proposed the inclusion of a budget line to cover the living expenses of one indigenous fellow for six months. OHCHR intends to launch the proposed programme in 2010.

F. Annual allocation of travel grants

50. In 2010 the secretariat received a total of 330 admissible applications to attend the sessions of the Expert Mechanism and the Permanent Forum. With the resources available, it was able to allocate 101 travel grants. From 1995 to 2010, the Fund allocated grants as illustrated in the figure below:



51. The distribution of grants from 1995 to 2008, by session, is represented as follows:

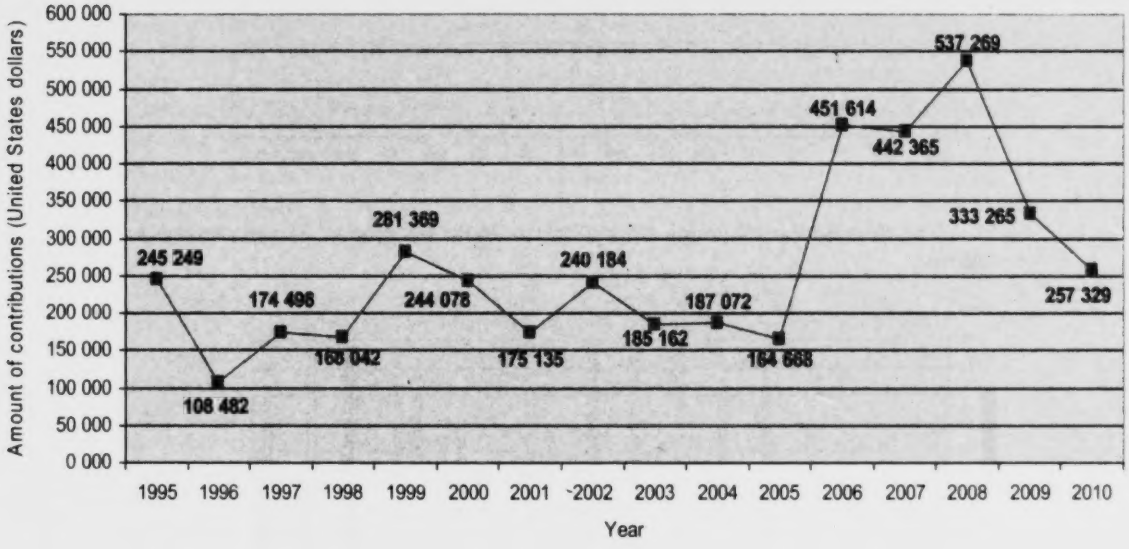

Year
1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009
Working Group on Indigenous Populations
Working group to elaborate a draft declaration on the rights of indigenous people
Working group on a permanent forum for indigenous people
Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

G. Contributions received by the Fund

52. The Board can allocate travel grants on the basis of the contributions paid and duly registered by the United Nations Treasurer, as well as any balance remaining from previous years, as established by the United Nations Office at Geneva.

53. Since the creation of the Fund in 1985, its mandate has been expanded five times in response to developments and the changing realities of the United Nations system and indigenous peoples. The Board and the secretariat have reacted immediately to those new challenges so as to enable indigenous peoples to benefit from each new mandate, with the support of donors. Over the years, the General Assembly and the regular donors to the Fund have viewed the Fund as an important tool in providing assistance to indigenous peoples and have recognized the accomplishments of its Board in carrying out this task.

54. The following figure shows the trend in contributions from 1995 to 2010:



V. How to contribute to the Fund

55. Governments, non-governmental organizations and other private or public entities can contribute to the Fund. Information on how to contribute can be obtained from the secretariat at: United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland. Telephone: + (41) (22) 928 97 37; + (41) (22) 928 91 64; facsimile: + (41) (22) 928 90 66; e-mail: IndigenousFunds@ohchr.org.

VI. Recommendations

56. **The Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations foresees the need for an additional $868,560 prior to the twenty-fourth session of the Board, to be held from 7 to 11 February 2011, in order to fund a sufficient number of the new applicants expected in 2011 and to satisfactorily fulfil its mandate. All Governments and other potential donors are encouraged to contribute to the Fund by the end of 2010 so that the contributions may be duly recorded by the United Nations Treasurer in advance of the next annual session of the Board.**